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HELLS CANYON

SEVEN DEVILS SCENIC AREA

Forest Service

PA 558

U.S. Department of Agriculture

*From Heavens Gate
One Looks Into The Land of The Seven Devils
and Into the Depths of Hells Canyon.*



HELLS CANYON

Seven Devils Scenic Area

Between Homedale and Lewiston, Idaho, the Snake River writhes its way north, separating the States of Oregon and Idaho. For some distance this river flows through the deepest gorge on the North American continent, Hells Canyon.

To the east the Seven Devils Range in Idaho, volcanic in origin, towers 8,000 feet above the river. The western side of the canyon formed by the flat-topped ridge between the Imnaha and Snake Rivers rises precipitously, 5,500 feet in a distance of about 2 miles. Part of this western wall is broken by a natural bench at 3,500 feet, and jutting out into the canyon are circular rock promontories that form natural observation points.

From the crests of the ridges a person can look for miles into Oregon and Washington, Idaho, and Montana, across grassy plateau country and tumbling masses of mountains, and into nine National Forests. Steep grassy walls of the canyon are open, with few trees except along the streams. Higher up, the grass gives way to rock and tree-rimmed lakes.

Here is one of America's great playgrounds of the future. Here the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service has planned a 130,000-acre Scenic Area extending for 22 miles along the Snake River. It will be developed and managed for many uses, but primarily for its scenic and recreational values. Many groups have endorsed these plans realizing that the area has attractions which should be made more accessible to local and out-of-State visitors.

The Hells Canyon-Seven Devils Scenic Area, located in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest in Oregon and the Nezperce and Payette National Forests in Idaho, is named for its two main features. The name *Hells Canyon* originally was given to a tributary of the Snake River. Today it applies to the deepest portion of the canyon.

The Seven Devils Mountains, according to legend, were named by an Indian brave who was lost in the craggy country on an annual hunt. He wandered for days, becoming more and more confused. Finally he met a devil, and as he fled from it he met a second, and a third, until there were seven. On his return to the tribe, he told of his adventure and thenceforth the mountains were known as the Seven Devils.



F-456911

A Scenic Area Defined

Just as the name implies, a National Forest Scenic Area is a portion of a Forest which includes scenic resources and is managed on a "scenery first consideration" basis.

Other resources are utilized too—timber may be harvested, livestock may graze, campgrounds may be installed, prospecting and mining may continue; but these uses and developments are managed and planned so that they will not impair the outstanding scenic values which have been accorded preferential priority.





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All told, 52 such areas have been established, under a Secretarial regulation, in the 154 National Forests administered by the Forest Service. Located in every section of the country, Scenic Areas vary in type from glacial lakes and yearlong snowfields in high mountain country to isolated ponds or forest glens in the lowlands.

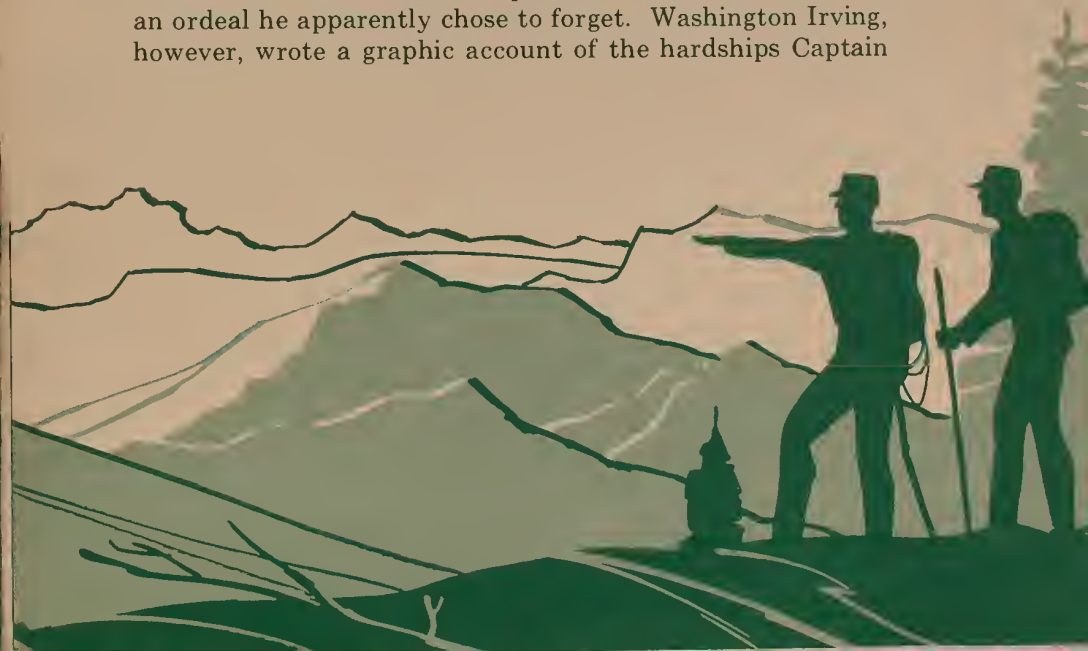
A Land of Contrast

The Hells Canyon-Seven Devils Scenic Area is a land of contrast, a spectacular monument to the forces of nature, a land as forbidding as it is beautiful. From the depths of Hells Canyon, where the Snake flows a mile deep in the earth, the land rears steeply upward to the heights of the Seven Devils. The land literally stands on end, yet most of the slopes below 4,000 feet are grass-covered and cattle and sheep have grazed here since the 1860's.

Shrubs and trees grow along the banks of streams that find their way through countless side canyons to the Snake, and above 4,000 feet there is timber. Still higher, the peaks of the Seven Devils rise rocky and bare except for year-round patches of snow. The Devils, the oldest land formation in the area, are composed mostly of volcanic rock, greenstone, and Columbia River basalt, with small intrusions of granite at the higher elevations.

The summer heat soars to 115° in the canyon floor, but on the ridge crests recreationists shiver in their sleeping bags on a midsummer's night.

Early explorers found this a difficult land. Only a few Piute and Snake Indians wintered here, and the Nezperce crossed it infrequently. Donald McKenzie with the 1811 Wilson-Price-Hunt Expedition for the Astor Pacific Fur Company was the first white man known to have penetrated the country. It was an ordeal he apparently chose to forget. Washington Irving, however, wrote a graphic account of the hardships Captain



B. L. E. Bonneville encountered working his way north on the west bank of the river in 1833 and 1834.

Although bypassed by trappers and by parties opening up the West, Hells Canyon attracted a few homesteaders. They found a harsh life and a poor living on the narrow strips of bottom land. Yet stockmen, and later miners, did well here. An old road in the canyon, trails crossing the ridge from the Imnaha River, a mining tunnel, and crumbling buildings testify to a once thriving economy. Today no one lives within the Scenic Area, and most of the private land in the canyon will be flooded by the Low Hells Canyon Dam, soon to be constructed under Federal Power Commission license.

The recreation potential of this country is almost untapped because only adventuresome people have dared venture far into it. A few hunters have roamed the area in pursuit of elk, deer, grouse, and quail. Fishermen have cast their lines into the high mountain lakes and the small creeks which empty into the Snake River and pulled out trout. From the Snake itself they have taken sturgeon, large game fish rare to American rivers, salmon and steelhead, catfish and bass.

Hardy hikers and horseback riders exploring trails have found artifacts, carvings in rocks, rare plants, and birdlife. Mountain climbers armed with ropes and ice axes have scaled He Devil, She Devil, Satan's Throne, the Tower of Babel, and three other unnamed major peaks of the Devils Mountains.

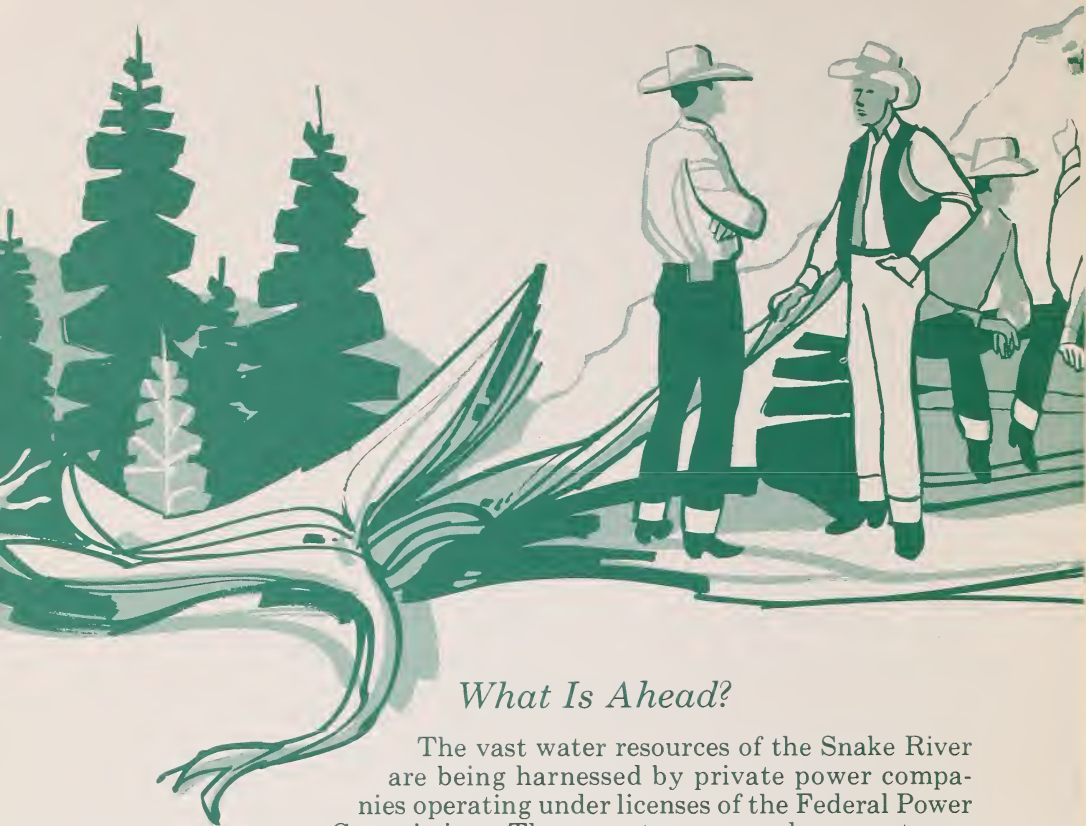
Within this vast area there are few recreation facilities. Some 40 miles of mountain road, steep and winding, provides access. At least half the 150 miles of trail is rough, although the Boise Trail, scene of old cattle drives, has been improved from the road's end at Seven Devils Station to Horse Heaven. Campgrounds are still primitive. Only a campground of seven family units in the Nezperce National Forest near Seven Devils Lake and a three-unit campground on Lower Cannon Lake, 3 miles from the road, are now fully developed.

Anyone planning to travel off the few improved roads and trails in this country should be guided by someone familiar with the area or get detailed information about travel routes. Otherwise, he may find himself in a pocket or tight spot from which he would have to backtrack.

Rugged to look at and rough to travel, this country is in part fragile. In some sections the topsoil is thin, susceptible to geological and man-caused erosion. A delicate balance exists between soil and cover. Indiscriminate use and fire can cause tremendous damage to such land.

The Forest Service multiple use management program for use of the area is designed to protect the fragile portions and yet permit orderly utilization of the resources. This long-range plan calls for construction of multipurpose roads and a trail system that will permit all types of forest recreation—sightseeing, hunting, and fishing.





What Is Ahead?

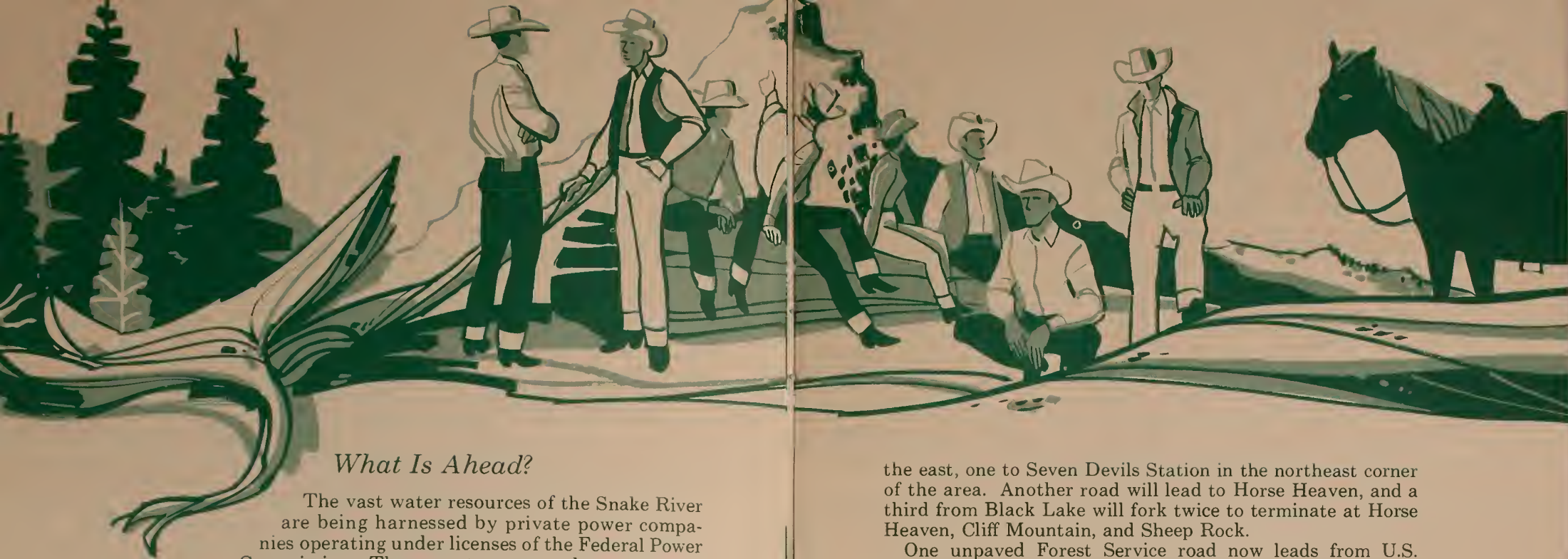
The vast water resources of the Snake River are being harnessed by private power companies operating under licenses of the Federal Power Commission. There are two power dams upstream from the Scenic Area: Brownlee and Oxbow. A third, the Low Hells Canyon Dam, will create a serpentine lake in the heart of the Scenic Area. Others being considered downstream may eventually result in a series of lakes. Low Hells Canyon Dam will make boating a major recreation use of the area.

Time was when boats were used above Hells Canyon for transportation of freight. Two of these sternwheelers were taken through the gorge because the owners had no further use for them on the upstream side. The first, in a hair-raising trip made in 1872, emerged from boiling Copper Ledge Falls with a broken paddle wheel and minus 8 feet of bow. After repair, she came through the rest of the gorge battered but usable. The second, a similar but smaller boat, made it without a scratch. Even today it takes an experienced boatman to navigate the canyon.

The new lake, however, with its quiet water, will change all that. Boating sites including ramps, camping areas, and roads are planned for use when the water backs up from the dams. Boat concessions will be permitted for equipment and supplies as needed.

Multipurpose roads will be built on the ridges and along the benches, some in the form of loops to take in high points of interest; others ending at overlooks.

As shown on the map, three roads will enter the area from



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the east, one to Seven Devils Station in the northeast corner of the area. Another road will lead to Horse Heaven, and a third from Black Lake will fork twice to terminate at Horse Heaven, Cliff Mountain, and Sheep Rock.

One unpaved Forest Service road now leads from U.S. Route 95, main highway between Grangeville and Boise, to Seven Devils Station and Heavens Gate, an 8,100-foot peak. Eventually a road may be built following an existing horse trail to the lookout tower on Dry Diggins (a name that graphically describes the work of miners who sifted gold from gravel deposits and surface soils without benefit of water).

Over the western ridge four entrance routes are planned to connect with a road which will extend along the crest. The roads will go up Crazyman Creek, Dry Creek, up Summit Creek to Buck Point, and lastly up Freezeout Creek to Barton Heights. A spur road will be built to Black Mountain, most spectacular overlook on the Oregon side. Another road will follow McGraw Bench to Buck Creek Ridge, also connecting with the ridge road. The washed-out portions of the Oxbow Bridge Road to the Low Hells Canyon Dam will be constructed.

Along these roads there will be turnouts for overlooks and camp and picnic grounds. From them, horse and foot trails will start off to back-country areas where an adventurer can get a taste of the primitive. The road and trail network will lead to the most scenic parts of the area.

The roads and trails will mean better access for hunting and fishing, both of which are permitted in seasons and under rules set by the State Fish and Game Departments. Already the Forest Service, working with the Idaho State Fish and Game Department, is taking steps to improve hunting by reintroducing mountain goats.



HELLS CANYON

SEVEN DEVILS SCENIC AREA

North



Homestead





HELLS CANYON

SEVEN DEVILS SCENIC AREA

North



Some of the Area Will Be Developed

Long-range Forest Service plans include:

National Forests

	Wallowa-Whitman	Payette	Nezperce	TOTAL
Campgrounds and				
Picnic Sites.....	18	18	19	55
Observation Points....	19	4	5	28
Boating Sites.....	11	(¹)	1	12
Miles of Access				
Roads.....	76	70	58	204
Miles of Trails.....	86	109	61	256

¹ Boat launching sites to be selected after water level is established.

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But Most Will Remain Wild

Much of the area will remain roadless, accessible only to those who backpack or ride horseback. Trails will lead to the massive hulks of the major “devils” and the dozens of little devils which make up the spectacular high country of the scenic area. At semisecluded spots near trails’ ends, and on the shores of many snow-fed lakes nestling in the laps of the Devils, there will be small campgrounds for those with a pioneer spirit who seek a wilderness experience.

The area between Saddle and Battle Creeks on the west side of the Snake River also will be open only to trail travel because of soil conditions. There will be a main trail along the river which riders may use, while side trails to overlooks will be for hikers only.

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Other Resources Will Be Used . . .

Timber will be harvested.—To date there have been no logging operations within the scenic area because most of the commercially usable timber is in inaccessible patches. The multipurpose roads will contribute to the operation of local sawmills by making timber harvesting in parts of the area economically practicable.

Scenic values, however, will be protected. Sales contracts will specify the types of logging equipment and methods which will maintain scenic appearances. Logging will be done generally before and after the peak of the recreation season, and provisions will be made for removal of logging.

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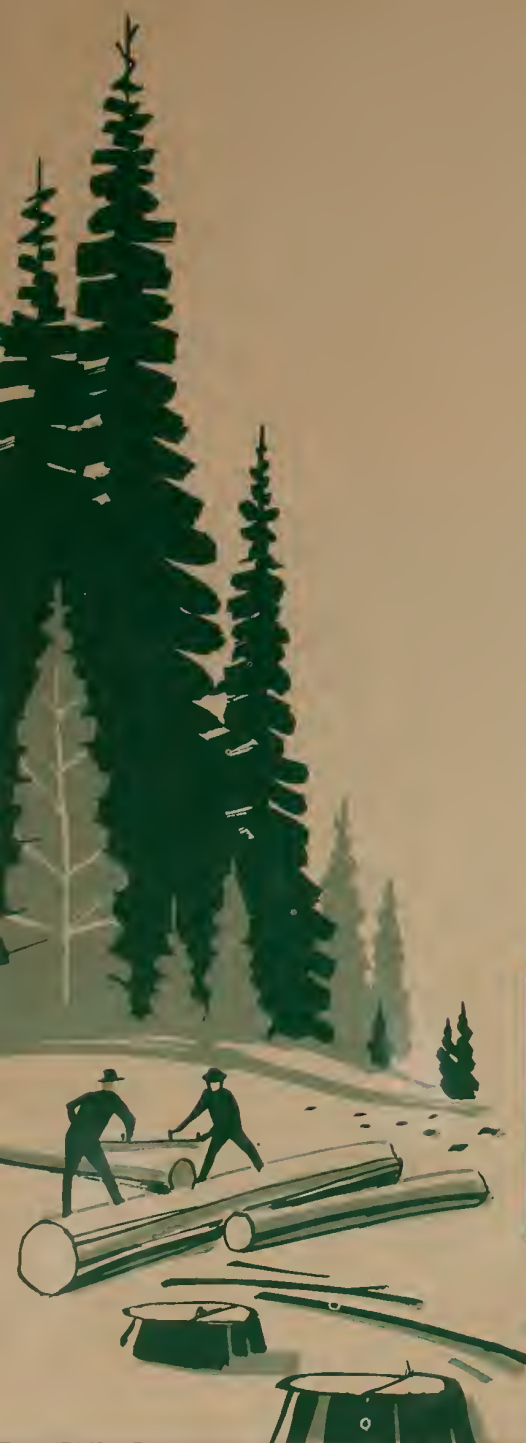
already in effect. The usual range inspections will be made periodically to check on soil conditions and forage.

At present sheep graze during the winter months along the Snake River front in the Wallowa-Whitman between Battle Creek and Saddle Creek and on the east side in the Nezperce National Forest. In the Payette National Forest, on the other hand, sheep graze during the summer. Cattle graze in the fall in the Barton Heights, Hells Canyon Creek, and Steamboat areas in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, and during alternate years on the Squaw Creek benches. There are cattle, too, on the Nezperce and the Payette.

Mining and prospecting will continue.—Designation of the Hells Canyon-Seven Devils country as a Scenic Area will not affect mining or prospecting operations under the U.S. mining laws.

Mining in those parts of the Wallowa-Whitman and Nezperce National Forests which lie in the Scenic Area has been on a small scale; however, about \$1,000,000 worth of copper, gold, silver, and tungsten were taken from the Payette portion between 1890 and 1900.

There were smelters at nearby towns and a road was built down the Kleinschmidt grade within the area to the Snake near Homestead. In fact, mining was so profitable that a railroad right-of-way was surveyed into the area and construction started, although never finished; and the Union Pacific ran a spur line from Huntington, Oreg., to Homestead which was used until the 1930's. Now this mining activity has ceased.



Other Benefits Will Be Increased

With its magnificent scenery and unsurpassed opportunities for outdoor recreation, the Hells Canyon-Seven Devils Scenic Area can become one of America's finest recreation areas and one of the great attractions of the Northwest. At present about 10,000 intrepid recreationists venture into the area each year. Under the Forest Service development programs the Scenic Area can accommodate eight times that number by the end of 1972 without overcrowding.

Careful, systematic development means more business for nearby towns. Outside the area, motels, hotels, restaurants, and resorts will be needed to take care of the visitors. Dude ranches will have new routes of travel to offer guests. Packers will be in demand. Sporting goods stores will have increased calls for gear.

The combination of uses planned for the Hells Canyon-Seven Devils Scenic Area—timber cutting, grazing, mining, waterpower, and recreation—will help tremendously in stabilizing the local economy.

For further information, contact headquarters of Forest Supervisors:

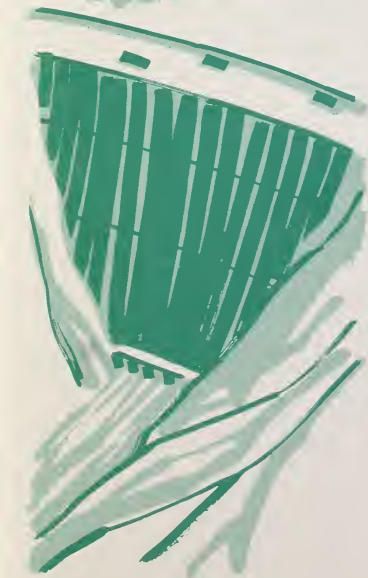
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Baker, Oreg.
Nezperce National Forest, Grangeville, Idaho
Payette National Forest, McCall, Idaho



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The Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, is dedicated to the principle of multiple use management of the Nation's forest resources for sustained yields of wood, water, forage, wildlife, and recreation. Through forestry research, cooperation with the States and private forest owners, and management of the National Forests and National Grasslands, it strives—as directed by Congress—to provide increasingly greater service to a growing Nation.

Issued March 1963



